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Archival Resources on the Web—Emily Symonds Stenberg, Assistant Editor

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On-Line Access to Temperance, Prohibition, and Beyond

By Emily Hikes, *Filson Historical Society*

Nearly 80 years ago, scores of spirited Americans welcomed the Twenty-First Amendment to the United States Constitution and the end of Prohibition (1920–1933). The 1933 amendment permitted states to set their own laws for the sale of alcohol, and it repealed the Eighteenth Amendment from 1919, which prohibited the manufacturing, sale, and transportation of intoxicating liquors, as well as the Volstead Act that enforced it. Prohibition of alcohol was a product of the temperance movement which had been steadily gaining potency since America's birth, and gaining popularity following Benjamin Rush's 1784 tract, *An Inquiry Into the Effects of Ardent Spirits Upon the Human Body and Mind*, accessible through Project Gutenberg at <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/27146/27146-h/27146-h.htm>.

By the nineteenth century, a large number of temperance-minded organizations had been formed to champion abstinence and levelness with alcohol, including the American Temperance League in 1826. The movement lost some momentum during the Civil War, but finally succeeded in crashing the party with the renewed efforts of new organizations, significantly the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), formed in 1874, and the Anti-Saloon League of 1893, which produced the 1919 Amendment and complementary legislation.

With the 80 years since the dissolution of this curious phase, its complexity and alien nature have reached practically mythical stature for contemporary audiences. Interest in the history of alcohol and its reform remains potent, thanks to such provocative byproducts of Prohibition as "hatchetations," saloons, speakeasies, bootlegging, moonshine, gangsters, and flappers. The mainstream attention to these subjects by way of our nation's archival resources in the last three years is proof-positive of this attraction to the Prohibition era. HBO's *Boardwalk Empire* premiered in 2010, with historical assistance from the Atlantic City Library's archivist Heather Perez, who was highlighted in *American Libraries Magazine* at <http://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/news/10112010/boardwalk-empire-s-librarian>; the three-part Ken Burns documentary film series, *Prohibition*, aired in 2011; and the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, opened an elaborate exhibition in 2012,

"American Spirits: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition." Fortunately, no laws have caused a shortage in on-line access to the relevant and revelatory archival materials on this history. Many archives have popped the digital cork on their respective materials covering this past, and have infused the World Wide Web with a variety of top-shelf resources providing information in both traditional and unique on-line presentation.

Brown University Library facilitates a broad approach to the study of alcohol history. The digital collection "Alcohol, Temperance, and Prohibition" at <http://library.brown.edu/cds/temperance/> is a keyword-searchable database of broadsides, pamphlets, government publications, and sheet music from Brown's Alcoholism and Addiction Studies collection. Items in this collection touch upon six centuries of alcohol-related materials, with an emphasis on resources for the study of temperance and Prohibition. An on-line finding aid for both subject and author searches in this collection is available from the main collection page <http://library.brown.edu/collections/kirk/index.php>, as well as research tools and related Web sites with guides, general information, and related collections at <http://library.brown.edu/collections/kirk/research.php>. One such related collection is the Alcohol History Database http://www.scc.rutgers.edu/alcohol_history/, compiled by Rutgers University. The database is another survey of the temperance and Prohibition movements, consisting of over five hundred monographs, pamphlets, and journals.

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) has taken their record groups a step further and compiled "Teaching with Documents: The Volstead Act and Related Prohibition Documents," <http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/volstead-act/>. NARA utilizes digitized documents from their record groups and corresponding teaching activities that adhere to national educational standards for the teaching of civics, government, and modern America.

Although our colleagues in the Northeast have numerous other resources, one need not even venture outside of the MAC region to encounter a fully-stocked repertoire of resources. With selections from their photographic archives, *The Detroit News* has generated a gallery of

(Continued on page 18)

(Continued from page 17)

photos visually describing fragments of the Prohibition era, as it was in Detroit, at <http://apps.detroitnews.com/apps/multimedia/gallery.php?id=13636>. The “Tribune Photo Archive” <http://www.tribunephotos.com> provides a large collection of photographs from the *Chicago Tribune* and *The Baltimore Sun*, which are categorized by subject.

A visit to the University of Iowa’s Iowa Digital Library, <http://digital.lib.uiowa.edu/cdm/>, enables access to page scans of around 50 years of proceedings for meetings and conventions of the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union of Iowa and other related materials. These documents are found within the “Woman’s Christian Temperance Union,” <http://digital.lib.uiowa.edu/wctu/>, and “Women’s Suffrage in Iowa,” <http://digital.lib.uiowa.edu/suffrage/>, digital collections. The entire Digital Library is searchable by creator, date, subject, and format, and is a collection of digital objects assembled from the special collections of the University of Iowa Libraries and its partners.

Reviving a past museum exhibit by the Kansas History Museum on Carrie A. Nation (the infamous axe-wielding “saloon smasher”), the Kansas Historical Society hosts a virtual exhibit on their Web site: <http://www.ksks.org/p/online-exhibits-carry-a-nation-part-1/10589>. “Carry A. Nation: The Famous and Original Bar Room Smasher” captures Nation’s life’s work in Kansas as a crusader of the temperance movement, with a timeline of events, background information, photographs, and artifacts, as well as a quiz to test visitors’ knowledge, and hyperlinks to related information.

The South Dakota State Historical Society offers its state’s history of brewing beer with a virtual representation of a past exhibition, “Bottoms Up! Beer in South Dakota,” <http://www.flickr.com/photos/southdakotahistory/sets/72157626188204132/>. The photo set walks viewers through images of the exhibition replete with beer bottles, labels, photographs, and other items from the Society’s archives and museum. “Brewing and Prohibition,” <http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/turningpoints/tp-051/>, is the Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS) tapping the keg on primary and secondary resources for the study of the state’s beer legacy and its struggles and triumphs throughout Prohibition. The WHS feature their own pamphlets, manuscripts, and images, and also link to their catalog records to search for items not represented on-line, and even link to pages for landmarks relevant to Wisconsin’s own beer brewing history.

The Minnesota Historical Society (MHS) draws from their collections to produce podcasts and blog posts, providing users with up-close interactions with notable content within their holdings. “The Road to Prohibition” blog post conveys the rise and fall of Prohibition in Minnesota, with a slideshow of historic images and an accompanying detailed account, <http://discussions.mnhs.org/collections/2012/08/the-road-to-prohibition/>. This particular blog post suggests links to a research guide, “Gangsters in Saint Paul, Minnesota,” http://www.mnhs.org/library/tips/history_topics/14gangsters.html, and the “Saint Paul: Gangster Haven” podcast, <http://discussions.mnhs.org/collections/2010/12/st-paul-gangster-haven/>, which supply the background for Saint Paul’s unsavory reputation born of Prohibition days. Of further note is the MHS’s three cubic feet of Andrew J. Volstead and family papers. The materials mostly concern the Minnesota native’s notorious legislation and its consequences, and can be accessed via the on-line finding aid at <http://www.mnhs.org/library/findaids/P0012.xml>.

While the state of Kentucky was one of the first to ratify the Eighteenth Amendment, Kentucky’s constituents and other Appalachian states took their love of alcohol into the woods. The rural nature of Kentucky lent to rampant activity in bootlegging and moonshining, and many natives have discussed living with Prohibition and these illicit results via their oral histories. The Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, <http://www.kentuckyoralhistory.org/>, offers a robust collection of oral histories that are described in their on-line finding aids, which capture the alcohol culture of Kentucky in interviews with citizens, distillers, and moonshiners and their recollections before, during, and after Prohibition. Start with the subject “Prohibition” and explore from there. The Kentucky Historical Society provides additional oral histories of similar content with their “Pass the Word” project, <http://passtheword.ky.gov/>, which is a discovery tool produced by the Kentucky Oral History Commission. Providing appropriate search terms gives users access to relevant oral histories from all over the state of Kentucky.

The complexity of Prohibition is no easier to absorb in one sitting than is a gallon of white lightning. However, it does boast the depth of fine bourbon or a well-crafted cocktail, and these attributes and the resources that hold them up will ensure scholars’ and casual interest groups’ continued examinations and revelations derived from America’s boozy history and culture.